

Service recovery and customer delight: Examination of differences between customers in different spending categories

Keywords: service quality; service recovery; customer delight; consumer spending.

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SERVICE RECOVERY AND CUSTOMER DELIGHT: EXAMINATION OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CUSTOMERS IN DIFFERENT SPENDING GROUPS

ABSTRACT

Customer delight is known to exert positive significant influence on levels of customer loyalty even in service recovery situations. This study aimed at examining differences between lower and higher spending customers of cell-phone network service providers in their response to service recovery efforts. Data used in the analysis was collected from 540 customers from Gauteng, South Africa using a structured questionnaire. The findings show significant differences between lower and higher spending customers in their levels of customer delight following service recovery efforts. Lower spending customers were specifically found to show higher level of delight compared to higher spending customers. The findings point to the need for managers to take cognisance of the fact that service recovery efforts may have different effects on different customer segments. Managers need to identify recovery strategies that are appropriate for different customer segments and monitor their effectiveness in ensuring customer delight following service recovery efforts.

Keywords: Service failure, Service recovery, Customer satisfaction, Customer delight

1. INTRODUCTION

Ensuring customer satisfaction in service delivery is critical for business success (Bowden-Everson, Dagger & Elliot, 2013:52). Service failure can however not always be avoided. When service failure occurs, customer dissatisfaction and complaints are inevitable. In order to avoid the negative consequence associated with dissatisfaction it is important for service providers to engage in service recovery. Boshoff (2012:1) defines service recovery as the actions firms take to restore a customer to a state of satisfaction after a service failure occurred. Service recovery helps to restore customer satisfaction and prevent customers from spreading negative word of mouth (Boshoff 2012:1; Kruger, Mostert & de Beer 2015:222, and Petzer & De Meyer, 2012:22). Customers who have encountered a negative service experience, followed by a dissatisfying post-recovery encounter with the same service provider are more likely to terminate their relationship with that provider and move to a new service provider. This, if unchecked can over time result in loss of market share for the service provider (Gustafsson, 2009:1220).

Finn (2012:99) as well as Alexander (2012:117) observed that in recent years' researchers in service marketing widely noted that it is not enough for firms to focus only on customer satisfaction following service failure but to go beyond this and ensure customer delight. This is because customer delight is known to have high level of positive influence on loyalty after service recovery. Oliver, et al., (1997:312) defines customer delight as a remarkably positive emotional response that result from having expectations surpassed to outstanding and unexpected degree. Studies by Loureiro, Miranda & Breazeale, (2014:102), Bowden-Everson, et al., (2013:54) as well as Swanson & Davies, (2012:264) support the notion that by focusing on customer delight firms are able to retain more customers. Alexander (2012:117) opines that delight can be derived from a positive affect that results in an element of surprise when a customer interacts with a company. The key determinant to customer delight is that it is an unexpected occurrence that results in a positive experience to the customer, with the aim of retaining the customer's patronage (Petzer & Steyn, 2006:167). Abbas, Abdullateef & Mokhtar (2015:258) argue that in certain instances surprise is a critical response to service failure. This is because doing so may assist in replacing the negative emotions, that people often experience as a result of service failure, with a surprisingly pleasant experience.

In examining customer delight, this study focuses on experiences of customers of cell phone network service providers in South Africa. The cell phone network service provider industry in South Africa is characterised by high levels of competition (Petzer, et al., 2012: 22: Van der

Merwe, 2015). Due to rapid growth in demand for the network, service failures such as slow connection to the internet, dropped calls or limited network coverage are known to occur. As no service company can claim to be exempt from service failure and the consequences thereof, it is particularly important for those operating in highly competitive industries to always look for ways of managing service failure in a way that results in delight. Kruger, et al. (2015:2222) specifically pointed out that it's essential for cell phone network service providers to keep their customers happy especially after a service failure has occurred. The lack of high levels of differentiation between the different service providers and the ease with which consumers can move from one provider to the next further necessitates the need for care in managing service failure in the South African cell-phone network service provider industry.

The paper is structured into eight main sections. The next section provides a review of the literature and following it is the section outlining the research problem and objectives of the study. Thereafter details relating to the research methodology and the results are presented respectively. This is followed by the discussion section that includes the managerial implications. The limitations of the study are thereafter presented and suggestions for future research provided before concluding.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review consists of two main sections, the first of which provides a brief overview of the cell phone network service provider industry in South Africa. In this section the four major players in the industry are introduced and details relating to their current market share are given. The section also looks consumer segments in the industry. The second main section discusses the key concepts in this study including service recovery, perceived justice, customer satisfaction and customer delight. This section also presents the hypothesis positioned in the study based on literature.

2.1 Overview of the South African cell phone network service provider industry

The South African cell phone network service provide industry consists of four main players namely Vodacom, MTN, Cell C and Telkom. The first two players in this industry were Vodacom and MTN who started operations in 1994. In 2001 Cell C entered the South African mobile industry with Telkom Mobile commencing its operations in 2010 (Cell C, 2016). According to Stat SA (2016) the telecommunications industry earns its income in a number of ways which include airtime, connection income, subscriptions, and mobile device sales. This industry thus provides customers with a range of services to ensure customers are able to stay connected to the rest of the world.

The industry is highly competitive. In November 2015 Vodacom reported a market share of 38.4%, MTN 33.2% with Cell C and Telkom having a market share of 25.1% and 2.6% respectively (Businessstech, 2015). In 2015, the mobile penetration rate in South Africa was sitting at 164.5% (International Telecommunications Union, 2015). The high mobile penetration rate means that for the cell phone network service providers in the country, the only major way to grow their market share is to attract customers from other service providers using strategy that focusses on quality, innovation and most importantly service. Service providers who fail to provide this are likely to find it hard to retain customers and/or attract new ones.

2.2 Customer segmentation in the South African cell phone industry

There are two customer segments in the cell phone industry: the prepaid customer segment and the contract customer segment. A study conducted by the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) South Africa and Effective Measure revealed that 40% of cell phone users make use of prepaid services while 60% of cell phone users were on contract (Mybroadband, 2015). The study furthermore highlighted that majority of the prepaid market spend less than R350 per month and a large percentage of the contract market spend R350 and more per month on their cell phone network services.

Prepaid services were only made available in South Africa in the year 1996 (Petzer, et al., 2012:28). Since then this service has proven to be very popular among the lower earning market segment as it allowed the user to control their spending and only load airtime or data as and when it suited them (Petzer, et al., 2012:29). Petzer, et al., (2012) noted that contract customers were mainly customers with a stable salary and a good credit score. Most businesses also make use of contract services to run their operations. Seeff (2015) observed that contract customers in South Africa express a lot of unhappiness with the services provided by the cell phone network service providers (Seeff, 2015). According to Seeff (2015) contract customers are locked into 24 month contracts and often pay more than anticipated on a monthly basis. Seeff (2015) also pointed out that cell phone network providers are not transparent with the rates they charge contract customers and when the bill comes at the end of the month these users are left reeling with the exorbitant bills that they get. Seeff, 2015 further notes that contract customers are forced to take out bundle deals which means the customer pays for services they don't use. Often contract customers do not feel that cell phone service network providers are providing them with the service value they expected (Petzer, et al., 2012:25). Service providers have thus a lot to do to ensure they keep these customers satisfied. This needs to also include having in place service recovery strategies for use in cases where service failure occurs.

In their study, Petzer, et al., (2012:25) found that contract customers are more likely to respond to service failure than prepaid customers. This could result from the fact that contract customers are bound to a longer term contract and generally pay more for services therefore they have higher service expectations than those of prepaid customers. Such customers can be vocal if their expectations are not met. Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler (2012:56) opines that if a customer knows of other providers who can provide a similar service their expectations of service levels become a lot higher. It is therefore important for cell phone network service providers to provide their customers with the best possible service and invest in customer delight strategies which are aimed at increasing customer loyalty and the company profits in the long run. Failure to offer good services to customers can result in them switching to competitors.

While this is so researchers including Orsingher, Valentini and De Angelis (2010) as well as Abbas, et al., (2015:256) note that it is not always possible to provide satisfactory services to customers as service failure cannot always be avoided. With service failure being inevitable in any business, the management of it can be an important differentiator This is because if not well managed, it can lead to loss of customers but if well managed service recovery efforts can result customer retention (Chang & Chen, 2013:565). The next section looks at the concepts of service failure and service recovery in more detail.

2.3 Service failure and service recovery

Abbas et al., (2015:252) state that when customers interact with a service provider they expect their needs to be met. Those on contract expect the service provider to act in accordance with the service contract. When these expectations are not met, the customer deems it as a service failure. Service failure can therefore be defined as an organisation failing to meet the consumer's perceived or actual expectations (Petzer, et al., 2012:25). It is an indication that something in the relationship between the consumer and the service provider has gone wrong (Tsai, Yang & Cheng 2014:140; Abbas, et al., 2015:257; Anupam, Dangayach & Rakesh 2011:39). According to Wilson et al., (2012:340) as well as Bhandari, Tsarenko and Polonsky (2007:177) service failures can occur as a result of a number of reasons including misbehaviour of employees or the service not performing in the manner it is supposed to. In the case of cell phone network service providers examples of service failure include instances where the network is down and customers are unable to make and receive calls, or where they have been billed incorrectly. It can also occur in instances where customers raise concerns with service provider and the response they receive is unsympathetic and perhaps even rude.

When service failure occurs it commonly leads to negative feelings towards the service provider such as dissatisfaction and anger (Wilson et al., 2012:340; Harrison-Walker 2012:118). It is therefore imperative that firms invest in ways to rectify service failures through service recovery strategies. Abbas, et al. (2015:257) defines service recovery as the deliberate actions of a service provider to address customer concerns relating to the service they received. If customer feels that their concerns have been heard it can result in customer satisfaction and retention. However, if a customer feels that the service provider has not taken the necessary steps to adequately address the service failure the customer can defect to a competitor or spread negative word of mouth (Chang & Chen, 2013:565). Thus appropriate service recovery strategies need to be in place to ensure the successful address of service failure in the eyes of the consumers (Lin, Wang & Chan, 2011:512). The extent to which service recovery efforts will result in positive consequences will normally depend on perceived justice associated with service recovery efforts. The next sub-section looks at the concept of perceived justice.

2.4 Perceived Justice

Perceived justice in the context of service recovery can be defined as how fair customer experience the service recovery process (Chang & Chang, 2010:340). Literature on justice in service recovery identifies three main dimensions that are used to assess fairness of service recovery efforts. These include interactional justice, distributive justice and procedural justice (Nikbin, Armesh, Herdari & Jalakamali, 2011:9814; Kim, Kim & Kim, 2009:52). Interactional justice refers to the extent to which a customer feels he has been treated fairly by the service staff during the service recovery process (Kuo & Wu, 2012:129). Nikbin, et al., (2012:312) refers to distributive justice as the extent to which a customer feels that the outcome of the service recovery effort is representative of the cost incurred by the customer due to the failure itself. It is about the extent to which the outcome of service recovery is perceived as fair compensation (Wang, et al., 2011:352; Chang, et al., 2010:340). Lastly procedural justice refers to the extent to which the customer feels that the service provider's processes and procedures are reasonable in order to provide a positive outcome after a service failure (Nikbin, et al., 2012:312 & Kuo, et al., 2012:129).

Kim et al., (2009:52) pointed out that the extent to which the customer feels justice in service recovery process determines the level of post recovery customer satisfaction. Studies by Smith and Mpinganjira (2015:40) as well as Kim et al., (2009:60) show that perceived levels of justice exert positive influence on levels of satisfaction with a service provider. The next section looks at the concepts of customer satisfaction and customer delight in some detail.

2.5 Customer satisfaction and delight

In the past, satisfaction was widely seen as the main factor that effects customer's behavioural intentions (Oliver et al., 1997:312). As time went on it became apparent to researchers that it was possible for business to produce higher levels of service quality that results in satisfaction but not increased loyalty. This is where the importance of going beyond customer satisfaction to customer delight became apparent. Berman, (2005:130) notes that customer delight is an emotional reaction that binds a customer to a product. Chandler (1989) described it as the response of customers when they get a service that not only gratifies, but delivers unanticipated value. A few important components of customer delight include, firstly that it is a positive response, it is emotional and it is often surprising or unexpected. Some researchers though note that surprise is not essential for customer delight to occur (Barnes, Ponder, & Dugar, 2011:265; Crotts & Magnini 2011:720). In such cases delight is just an extreme expression of customer satisfaction. Berman, (2005:134) as well as Coetzee (2014:3) opines that customer satisfaction and customer delight differ in many ways and should therefore not be seen as having a linear relationship. According to Berman, 2005:134 one of the differences between customer satisfaction and customer delight is that satisfaction is based on cognitive perception where delight is based on emotion. He argues that satisfaction requires meeting

expectations and delight requires doing the unexpected) And that because delight finds its basis in emotion it is more memorable than satisfaction.

While the distinct differences between customer delight and customer satisfaction may be apparent, both concepts find their origins in the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm. The expectancy disconfirmation paradigm states that when a customer purchases and uses a product or service the actual performance levels are revealed. Customers then compare the actual performance levels to their expected performance levels. According to this paradigm negative disconfirmation will occur when the actual performance is lower than the expected performance. Positive disconfirmation occurs when the actual performance is better than the expected performance and confirmation occurs when the product or service performs as expected (Swanson et al., 2012:264; Oliver et al., 1997:315). It therefore stands to reason that customer's expectations are a key determinant of customer delight. Beauchamp and Barnes (2015:338) note that customer expectations sometimes differ depending on customer segment. In their study they found significant differences in levels of customer delight between customers of different age groups. This study aims at uncovering if there are differences in levels of customer delight between lower and higher spending customers of cell phone network service providers following service recovery efforts. This is in recognition of the fact that monthly spend is an important criteria for segmenting customers in the cell phone network service provide industry. The hypotheses put forward is that:

There are statistically significant differences in levels of delight between low and high spending customers of cell phone network service providers following exposure to service recovery.

Lastly apart from just shedding light on levels of customer delight following service recovery efforts, this study also examines whether there are significant differences in consumer's levels of delight between different groups of customers categorised according to the amount they spend each month on cell phone services. Knowledge of this is critical for a firms in the industry to develop effective service recovery strategies that appeal to different segments of their markets.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES

While a number of studies have been conducted on customer delight (Boshoff, 2012; Oliver, et al., 1997; Schneider& Bowen, 1999; Alexander, 2012) most of them do not look at customer delight after the customer has been disappointed by a firm. As a result not much is known about customer delight post service recovery efforts (Boshoff, 2012; Swanson, et al, 2012). The few studies that have been conducted in this area are mainly based on samples drawn from developed countries (Swanson, et al, 2012:263; Beauchamp, et al., 2015:338). No empirical study could be found that has looked at service recovery efforts in relation to this industry and the effects of such efforts on customer delight. This study aims to contribute to the literature by examining customer delight post service recovery efforts in the South Africa cell phone network service industry. Apart from just shedding light on levels of customer delight following service recovery efforts, this study also examines whether there are significant differences in consumer's levels of delight between different groups of customers categorised according to the amount they spend each month on cell phone services. The key research question addressed in this study is:

Do consumers in different spending categories respond differently in terms of levels of delight following service recovery efforts?

Thus the objectives of the study are the following:

3.1 Primary objective:

To investigate differences in levels of customer delight between lower and higher spending customers of cell phone network service providers following exposure to service recovery efforts.

3.2 Secondary objectives:

- To uncover the demographic characteristics of lower and higher spending cell phone network service customers in the study.
- To examine levels of delight among lower and higher spending cell phone network service customers following exposure to service recovery efforts.
- To investigate differences in levels of delight between lower and higher spending cell phone network service customers following exposure to service recovery efforts.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive quantitative research design. The target population for the study was cell phone network service provider customers in Gauteng, South Africa. Due to budget and time constraints this study was limited to only one Province. Gauteng was selected because the researchers were based in Gauteng. Furthermore, Gauteng is the most populated province and the economic hub of the country, attracting people from all other provinces (Southafrica.info, 2015). As there was no list of customers of cell phone network service provider to be used as a sampling frame, non-probability sampling method in the form of quota sampling, was used to choose the respondents. Quota sampling ensured that customers from different gender and age subgroups are represented in the final sample.

Survey method using a structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaire was self-administered, this data gathering method means that participants read the questions and registers the answers on their own (Hair, et al., 2013:11). The advantages of using a self-administered questionnaire is that the respondents are not influenced by an interviewer and are more comfortable to provide honest responses (Hair et al., 2013:115). Nominal and ordinal scales were used to capture respondents' demographic information as well as patronage behavior. A 7-point semantic differential scale anchored on 1 = satisfied and 7 = delighted was used to measure level of delight. This is consistent with how delight was measured in past studies including studies by Berman (2005); Bowden-Everson et al., (2013). The items used to measure levels of customer delight were adapted from past studies by Berman (2005; Bowden-Everson, et al. 2013. Use of items from past studies helps enhance validity and reliability of measures (Hair, et al, 2013: 166). B. Com Honours students were used to collect the data as a required course outcome for their Marketing Research Module. A total of 500 usable questionnaires were returned.

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), version 23, was used to capture, clean and analyse the data collected. Before the main analysis, customer delight scale was assessed for reliability and convergent validity. Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to assess scale reliability while factor analysis was used to examine convergent validity. The results of the analysis, presented in table 1 shows that customer delight as measured using seven items presented in table 1 is a reliable scale. Its alpha coefficient was found to be 0.944. According to Hair et al. (2013:166) an alpha coefficient of 0.7 and above indicate high levels of reliability. Findings in table 1 also provide evidence of convergent validity. Hair et al., (2013:167) states that factor scores greater than 0.5 on each of the items associated with the scale indicates convergent validity. During the main analysis descriptive analysis was run to determine frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. Independent sample t-test as used to test the study's hypothesis. A 95% confidence interval and a 5% level of significance was relied on to accept or reject the hypothesis formulated in this study.

Table 1: Reliability and Validity

	Level of Customer delight statements	Factor Loadings	Alpha Coefficient
CSvCD1	The service of the cell phone network service provider meet or slightly exceeds my expectations	0.865	

	VS The service of the cell phone network service provider drastically exceeds my expectations		.944
CSvCD2	I believe I received reasonable value from the services offered by the cell phone network service provider VS I believe the value I received from the services by the cell phone network service provider is extremely high	0.862	
CSvCD3	The employees of the cell phone network service provider is competent VS The employees of the cell phone network service provider is highly competent	0.855	
CSvCD4	The services offered by the cell phone network service provider are memorable VS The services offered by the cell phone network service provider are especially memorable	0.887	
CSvCD5	The services offered by the cell phone network service provider are relatively unique VS The services offered by the cell phone network service provider are particularly unique	0.851	
CSvCD6	The cell phone network service provider provides basic post-purchase customer support VS The cell phone network service provider provides the highest level of post purchase customer support	0.866	
CSvCD7	The cell phone network service provider offers basic service recovery VS The cell phone network service provider offers extensive service recovery	0.869	

5. RESULTS

This section presents the results of the analysis. It starts by presenting findings on the descriptive analysis followed by results of hypotheses testing.

5.1 Descriptives

Included in this section are details on the profile of respondents, their cell phone provider patronage behaviour as well as findings on levels of customer delight of both low and high spending respondents.

5.1.1 Respondents demographic profile

Table 2: Descriptives: Demographic profile of respondents

Category	Lower Spending Consumer		Higher Spending Consumers		All respondents	
	<i>f</i>	Valid %	<i>f</i>	Valid %	<i>f</i>	Valid %
Gender						
Male	116	46.2	128	51.4	244	48.8
Female	135	53.8	121	48.6	256	51.2
Age group						
Gen Y (1981-2000)	130	51.8	119	47.8	249	49.8
Gen X (1965-1980)	67	26.7	84	33.7	151	30.2
Great Gen & Babyboomers (1900-1964)	54	21.5	46	18.5	100	16.0

Highest level of education						
Primary	11	4.4	6	2.4	17	3.4
High School	110	44.0	63	25.3	173	34.6
Diploma	56	22.4	50	20.1	106	21.2
University degree	65	26.0	104	41.8	169	34.0
Postgraduate degree	8	3.2	26	10.4	34	6.8
Racial group						
Black	166	66.1	85	34.1	251	50.
Coloured	31	12.4	43	17.3	74	14.8
Indian	23	9.2	44	17.7	67	13.4
White	29	11.6	75	30.1	104	20.8
Other	2	0.8	2	0.8	4	0.8

As shown in table 2 of the 500 respondents in the study 48.8% were male and 51.2% were female. The respondents were thus relatively well balanced in terms of gender. In terms of age it is clear that the Generation Y respondents made up the largest group in both spending segments. The highest number of respondents of this generation forms part of the lower spending group. The second largest generation group was the Generation X respondents (1965-1980) who made up 30.2% of all the respondents. In this group it's important to note that the highest percentage of respondents form part of the higher spending consumers group with a total of 33.7%. Great Generation and the Baby boomers (1900-1964) were not only the least in terms of numbers but the majority of respondents in this generation category fall within the lower spending segment with a total of 21.5% versus 18.5 % in the higher spending group. The largest number of respondents had a high school certificate (34.6%) followed by those with a University degree (21.2%). Within the lower spending group high school graduates form the majority of respondents (44%) while within the higher spending group University graduates were the majority (41.8%). In terms of race, the majority (50.2%) of the respondents were black. This racial group proves to be the highest group in both spending categories, with white consumers coming in a second.

5.1.2 Patronage Behaviour

Table 3 presents details relating to the cell phone service patronage behaviour of the respondents.

Table 3: Descriptives: Cell phone provider patronage behaviour

Category	Lower Spending Consumer		Higher Spending Consumers		All respondents	
	f	Valid %	f	Valid %	f	Valid %
Cell phone provider						
Cell C	46	18.3	44	17.7	90	18.0
MTN	77	30.7	72	28.9	149	29.8
Virgin Mobile	3	1.2	2	0.8	5	1.0
Vodacom	113	45.0	121	48.6	234	46.8
Telkom	12	4.8	10	4.0	22	4.4
Customer type						
Contract	63	25.1	183	73.5	246	49.2
Prepaid	188	74.9	66	26.5	254	50.8
Variable						
	Lower Spending Consumer		Higher Spending Consumers		All respondents	

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Average period with service provider	81.07	59.02	102.53	72.20	91.76	66.72

Results in table 3 show that at overall level the majority of the respondents (46.8%) were Vodacom customers followed by 29.8% who were customers of MTN. The results were not different when comparing the two spending groups with 30.7% of lower spending consumers using MTN versus the 45.0% of these consumers using Vodacom. 48.6% of higher spending consumers used Vodacom and 28.9% use MTN. 49.2% of all the respondents were contract customers, whereas 50.8% were prepaid customers. When comparing the two spending groups 74.9% of the lower spending group were prepaid and 73.5% of the higher spending group are contract customers. Results in table 3 also shows that respondents had been with their cell phone network service providers for an average of 91.76 months (7.6 years). On average both the lower and higher spending customers had been with their cell phone network service provider for over 5 years.

5.1.2 Customer Delight

After analysing the background characteristics of the respondents, the analysis focused on measuring customer delight levels between the two groups. This was in response to a scenario on service recovery effort presented to them. The customers were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the 7 statements measuring levels of customer delight. Since results from factor analysis show good convergent validity, overall level of delight was also calculated as a summated average of the 7 statements.

Table 4: Descriptives – Customer Delight

Items and Overall level of Customer delight	Lower spending customers		Higher spending customers		All respondents	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
Expectations The service of the cell phone network service provider meet or slightly exceeds my expectations VS The service of the cell phone network service provider drastically exceeds my expectations	4.76	1.66	4.47	1.65	4.62	1.66
Value I believe I received reasonable value from the services offered by the cell phone network service provider VS I believe the value I received from the services by the cell phone network service provider is extremely high	4.90	1.67	4.53	1.56	4.72	1.63
Employees The employees of the cell phone network service provider is competent VS The employees of the cell phone network service provider is highly competent	4.87	1.74	4.53	1.68	4.70	1.71

Memorable Services The services offered by the cell phone network service provider are memorable VS The services offered by the cell phone network service provider are especially memorable	4.66	1.81	4.35	1.71	4.50	1.77
Unique Services The services offered by the cell phone network service provider are relatively unique VS The services offered by the cell phone network service provider are particularly unique	4.60	1.82	4.24	1.78	4.42	1.81
Post-purchase support The cell phone network service provider provides basic post-purchase customer support VS The cell phone network service provider provides the highest level of post purchase customer support	4.68	1.72	4.32	1.73	4.50	1.73
Service Recovery type The cell phone network service provider offers basic service recovery VS The cell phone network service provider offers extensive service recovery	4.76	1.72	4.47	1.69	4.62	1.71
Overall level of customer delight	4.75	1.48	4.42	1.48	4.59	1.49

The results, presented in table 4, show that the overall mean for each of the 7 statements were above 4.50 on a seven-point scale. This shows that overall respondents were delighted with the service recovery effort. The factors relating to value and employee ranked the highest overall with a mean score of 4.72 and 4.70 respectively. An examination of the mean scores for the lower and higher customer groups shows some group differences. The overall level of customer delight within the lower spending group is higher than that of the higher spending group. The mean value of all but two factors were less than 4.50 for the higher spend group. These two factors include expectations, memorable services, unique services, post-purchase customer support and service recovery type.

5.2 Hypotheses testing

An independent sample t-test was run in order to find out if the differences in levels of customer delight between lower and higher spending customers were statistically significant. The results in table 5 show that at overall level, there are statistically significant differences in levels of delight between lower and higher spending customers of cell phone network service providers following exposure to service recovery. Accordingly, the proposed hypothesis in this study is not rejected. While this is so, it is important to note that the differences between lower and higher spending customers were largely due to four factors. The results in table 5 show that there were significant differences between lower and higher spending customers in 4 of the 7 factors. These were factors related to perceived post purchase support, uniqueness of services, employee competence and performance relative to expectations.

Table 5: Independent samples t-test

Factor	Levene's Test for equality of Variances		T-Test for equality of Means				
	F	Sig	T	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean difference	95% confidence interval of the Mean	
						Lower	Upper
Expectations The service of the cell phone network service provider meet or slightly exceeds my expectations VS The service of the cell phone network service provider drastically exceeds my expectations	0.40	0.84	2.011	0.045	0.298	0.07	0.589
Value I believe I received reasonable value from the services offered by the cell phone network service provider VS I believe the value I received from the services by the cell phone network service provider is extremely high	0.305	0.58	2.557	0.11	0.370	0.086	0.654
Employees The employees of the cell phone network service provider is competent VS The employees of the cell phone network service provider is highly competent	0.335	0.56	2.206	0.28	0.337	0.037	0.638
Memorable Services The services offered by the cell phone network service provider are memorable VS The services offered by the cell phone network service provider are especially memorable	0.401	0.53	1.944	0.052	0.307	-0.003	0.617
Unique Services The services offered by the cell phone network service provider are relatively unique VS The services offered by the cell phone network service provider are particularly unique	0.969	0.33	2.230	0.026	0.359	0.043	0.675
Post-purchase support The cell phone network service provider provides basic post-purchase customer support VS The cell phone network service	0.26	0.88	2.352	0.019	0.363	0.060	0.666

provider provides the highest level of post purchase customer support							
Service Recovery type The cell phone network service provider offers basic service recovery VS The cell phone network service provider offers extensive service recovery	0.062	0.80	1.862	0.063	0.285	-0.016	0.586
Overall level of customer delight	0.020	.889	2.49	.013	.3300	0.070	0.591

6. DISCUSSION

The main purpose of the study was to investigate whether there are significant differences in the levels of delight experienced between low & high value consumers in the cell phone network industry post service recovery. This study contributes to the existing body of research on customer delight by looking at the construct through the lens of a service recovery event and also looking at whether different consumer groups experience customer delight differently based on their differing expectations.

6.1 Summary of the findings

The results indicate that overall cell phone network service provider customers experienced high levels of delight after post service recovery. The reasons for high levels of delight can be linked to the unexpected nature of the service recovery effort and the fact that the service provider not only attempts to meet the consumers' expectations but to dramatically exceed them. These results align with findings from previous studies conducted by Beauchamp, et al. (2015:338), Bartl, Gouthier and Lenker. (2013:392) and Oliver et al., (1997:312), which state that if a company provides exceptionally high levels of service quality, customers experience high levels of satisfaction which is expressed as customer delight.

The primary objective was to uncover whether there are differing levels of customer delight between low spending and high spending consumers. The results proved that this was indeed the case, as the low spending groups exhibited high levels of delight in all of the factors used to measure customer delight in this study. The higher spending group only exhibited levels of delight when it came to measuring the value they received and their interaction with the employees. This shows that different customers react differently to the same service recovery strategy.

6.2 Managerial implications and recommendations

Firstly, the results show that in the service context managers can use service recovery strategies to not just satisfy their customers but to delight them. It is important to note that before managers attempt to delight their customer, they have to focus on satisfying their basic needs. Within the cell phone service network provider industry managers should attempt to alleviate the issues that lead to service failure in the first place. These would include no network coverage, dropped calls or exorbitant rates. Research has shown however that service failure cannot always be avoided. The cell phone network service provider industry in South Africa is highly competitive and highly saturated. The product and service offering is highly commoditised and the only way service providers can really compete is through providing exceptional service to their customers.

Managers should therefore invest time and money in appropriate service recovery strategies at each stage of the customer journey. In order for service recovery strategies to be effective and have an impact on the customers' behaviour, it should be memorable and meaningful for the customer based on the situation they find themselves in. These changes coupled with customer delight strategies could result in a cell phone network service provider emerge as the clear market leader and standing our head and shoulders above their competitors.

Secondly, the study proved that low spending groups displayed high levels of delight in all of the factors used to measure customer delight. High spending customers' levels of delight were only significant when they considered the value they received and their interaction with the employees.

Managers should implement different service recovery strategies based on the amount of money a customer spends on a monthly basis. Customers who spend more than R350 per month- mainly contract customers- expect better service delivery and are likely to be less forgiving when a service failure does occur. In order to delight these customers' cell phone service network providers would have to focus on providing these customers with exceptional value post service failure. Lower spending customers are more forgiving and slightly easier to please. These facts alone prove that managers can not apply a blanket approach to service recovery if they aim to delight their customers.

7. LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

While the results from this study provides a number of managerial implications, the study is not without its limitations. Data was only gathered within the Gauteng area due to budget restraints. In addition to this the study used non probability, quote sampling to gather data. The effect of this is that the results sample of participants are not a true likeness of the target population (customers of cell phone network service providers in SA), and that the results cannot be generalised to the entire South African population. The recommendation here is that upcoming research should attempt to include more provinces within the country and use probability sampling to allow for generalisation.

8. CONCLUSION

This study aimed at uncovering customer delight levels post service recovery among customers of South African cell phone network service providers. The primary objective was to compare low spending customers (spending less than R350 per month) to high spending customers (spending R350 or more per month), in terms of how delighted they were after a service recover encounter with their cell phone network service provider. The study also looked at the demographic profiles of customers in these two groups. The study uncovered that overall the consumers exhibited high levels of delight post the service recovery encounter. It also showed that low spending customers were particularly more delighted than the higher spending customers with the service recovery effort.

The findings of the study emphasised the importance of exceeding customer's service level expectations after a service failure has occurred. Due to the competitive nature of this industry, the service providers should go above and beyond to ensure they keep their customers delighted as this leads to higher levels of loyalty. The study also highlighted the fact that consumers are different and that it takes a lot more to impress a high spending customer. Therefore different service recovery strategies are important to ensure that the firm speaks to each customer segment at their point of expectation.

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